

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: EXGDS

TAGS: MASS, IR

SUBJ: IRANIAN REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON NAVAL MINES

REFS: A. CARMISH/MAAG MSG 091333Z FEB 75; B. CARMISH/

MAAG MSG 240715Z FEB 75

1. REFTELS REPORT IIN INTEREST IN ACQUIRING MAGNETIC AND
ACOUSTIC MINES FOR POSSIBLE USE IN PERSIAN GULF. UNLESS
THERE ARE CONSIDERATIONS WE ARE UNAWARE OF, WE BELIEVE
U.S. SHOULD REFUSE THIS REQUEST.

2. ISSUE OF PROVIDING NAVAL MINES TO IIN IS NOT RPT NOT
QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT WE ACCEPT IRANIAN ASSURANCES
THAT MINES WILL BE USED ONLY FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES IN
CONDITIONS OF DIRE SECURITY NEED. IN MEETING IRANIAN
REQUESTS FOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS WE ASSUME THAT GOI HAS NO
AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS TOWARDS ITS NEIGHBORS AND WILL
EMPLOY WEAPONS WITH GREAT PRUDENCE. THERE ARE, HOWEVER,

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SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WHICH BEAR ON OUR DECISION:

A. IT MUST BE ASSUMED THAT A USG DECISION TO SUPPLY MINES WOULD BECOME PUBLIC INFORMATION. IN VIEW (1) IRANIAN LAW OF SEA POSITION THAT PERSIAN GULF IS "CLOSED" OR "SEMI-CLOSED SEA" SUBJECT TO LITTORAL STATES' CONTROL AND (2) RUMORED IRANIAN-OMANI ARRANGEMENTS TO EXERCISE SOME SORT OF JURISDICTION OVER STRAIT OF HORMOZ, ARABS WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT ARGUMENT THAT IRAN DID NOT INTEND TO ENHANCE ITS ABILITY TO CONTROL ACCESS TO THE PERSIAN GULF WITH MINES FROM U.S. OUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE IRANIAN/ARAB COOPERATION ON REGIONAL SECURITY MATTERS WOULD BE SET BACK. OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES WOULD ALSO SUFFER.

B. WE BELIEVE WE MAY ALSO PREDICT A HOSTILE REACTION FROM CONGRESS TO A DECISION TO SELL MINES TO IRAN. SEVERAL FRIENDLY SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN WHO HAVE RECENTLY VISITED IRAN HAVE RAISED QUESTION WHETHER IRAN IS AN EXPANSIONIST POWER IN THIS REGION. IF IRAN WERE TO APPEAR TO BE SEEKING MEANS OF CONTROL OF STRAIT OF HORMOZ, WE BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE A SHARP REACTION IN CONGRESS.

C. GIVEN TECHNICAL WEAKNESSES OF IRANIAN NAVY, WE BELIEVE ANY POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF NAVAL MINES COULD EITHER CREATE HAZARDS FOR INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING OR REQUIRE SUPPORT OF FOREIGN PERSONNEL.

D. WE DO NOT BELIEVE ADEQUATE CASE CAN BE MADE FOR AN IRANIAN MILITARY NEED FOR ACQUIRING NAVAL MINES. WE NOTE THAT MISSILES ON IRAQI PATROL BOATS HAVE A RANGE OF ABOUT 20 MILES AND WE DO NOT SEE HOW MINES WOULD PROVIDE PRACTICAL DEFENSE AT PERSIAN GULF PORTS.

E. WERE IRAN TO DEPLOY MINES AGAINST IRAQ IN, SAY SHATT AL-ARAB, IT WOULD IMPLY CHALLENGE OF SOVIET UNION AND ARAB AND SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES LINKED WITH IRAQ.

F. IF WE DECLINE TO SELL MINES TO IRAN IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE IIN WILL LOOK FOR AN ALTERNATE SOURCE OF SUPPLY. THE BRITISH MIGHT BE THE FIRST ON THEIR LIST AND WILLING TO DO SO IN THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD ENHANCE THEIR PRESENT LIMITED SALES AND ADVISORY POSITION WITH THE IRANIAN NAVY.

G. FINALLY, IF WE DECLINE TO SELL MINES TO IIN, WE MAY HAVE TO COPE WITH IRANIAN SUSPICIONS WHETHER WE ARE SENDING A POLITICAL MESSAGE WITH BROADER IMPLICATIONS.

3. TAKING FOREGOING INTO ACCOUNT, WE BELIEVE, ON
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BALANCE, THAT THE DECISION SHOULD BE AGAINST OUR SUPPLYING MINES TO IRAN. WE SHOULD JUSTIFY OUR REFUSAL TO THE GOI ON GROUNDS THAT WE DO NOT HAVE A COMMON VIEW ON LAW OF THE SEA PROVISION FOR THE STRAIT OF HORMOZ AND THE PERSIAN GULF, AND THAT PROVISION OF MINES WOULD DAMAGE IRAN/ARAB AND U.S./ARAB RELATIONS IN THIS REGION. WE SHOULD ALSO POINT OUT TECHNICAL DRAWBACKS TO USE OF MINES FOR HARBOR DEFENSE.

4. ON ASSUMPTION DEPARTMENT AGREES WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD INFORM BRITISH OF OUR VIEWS AND ENLIST THEIR CONCURRENCE IN DENYING NAVAL MINES TO IRAN. IN ORDER THAT OUR FUTURE CONVERSATIONS WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS NOT BE COMPLICATED BY POSSIBLY ILL-FOUNDED IRANIAN EXPECTATIONS, WE ARE REQUESTING THAT THERE BE NO FURTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS ON THIS SUBJECT UNTIL A FIRM USG POSITION IS ADOPTED.

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